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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: JORDAN RELEASES GROUNDED IRAQI AIRWAYS PLANES

1. (U) Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Suleiman Obeidat confirmed to emboff 11/28 a recent AP report that the Government of Jordan (GoJ) has authorized the release of six Iraqi Airways planes grounded in Amman after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Obeidat added that Iraqi technicians would be arriving in Amman within a month to attempt to fix two of the six planes (Boeing 727s) and fly them back to Baghdad. According to Obeidat, the other four planes "are not flyable or repairable." When asked what would happen to those four planes, Obeidat said it was "up to the Iraqis" to determine how to transport the aircraft," but noted that "the four planes are definitely being removed from the ramp to a natural surface immediately."

2. (U) When asked if the GoJ was requiring a payment for storage fees (understood to be approximately \$5.5 million) to release the planes, Obeidat was clear that while the GoJ Ministry of Finance had approved the release without payment, the fees were still due in theory.

3. (SBU) COMMENT: The GoJ,s authorization to release the aircraft is in response to a request made by the GoI, and is a sign of Jordan,s interest in further improving relations with its eastern neighbor. One possible reason for the decision to release the planes at this time may be the need for additional space to support new slots at Queen Alia International Airport in Amman for both an emerging domestic carrier, and for routes that Royal Jordanian is not using and plans to sell to international carriers.
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